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Fig 1. Head of Buddha Amaravati, 1st or 2d century

Buddhist Sculpture

*Recent Acquisitions**

Gautama Buddha was born at Kapilavastu 560 B. C. and died at Kusinara 483 B. C. His doctrines and discipline (the "Aryan Eightfold Path," etc.) relate exclusively to individual effort, and in no way imply or necessitate a cult. The popular Brahmanical gods are recognized merely as beings like men in need of salvation, and are mentioned only incidentally as worshippers or helpers of the Buddha. After the death of the Buddha and cremation the ashes were divided into eight parts, over which were erected memorial funeral mounds (*stupas*). These mounds and similar memorial monuments (*cetiyyas*) subsequently erected soon came to be regarded by the lay adherents of the Buddhist system as sacred sites and places of pilgrimage. The beginnings of Buddhist art are probably to be traced to the tokens or medals, stamped with

symbols referring to the event of the Buddha's life commemorated at each site, which the pilgrims carried away as mementos of their visits; the Wheel, for example, referring to the Preaching of the First Sermon in the Deer Park at Benares, spoken of as Setting in motion the Wheel of the Law—a tree, the Great Enlightenment—a *stupa*, the death of the Master. In the reign of Asoka (272-232 B. C.) many more *cetiyyas* were erected, amongst which may be mentioned those of Barhut, Sanci, Bodhgaya and Amaravati in their original forms. In the second and first centuries B. C., in the first three cases, and in the latter part of the second century A. D., in the latter case, under the patronage of Sunga and Andhra kings, elaborate stone railings, usually sculptured, and sculptured gateways were added to the existing monuments. The three first mentioned sites are the types of what is known as "Early Buddhist Art." This art consists entirely of sculpture in relief. It illustrates the already renowned episodes of the Buddha's life, though representing the Buddha in these scenes merely by symbols; and of edifying representations of mythical events in the previous lives (according to the *jataka*s, or "birth stories")

*Of the objects illustrated in the present article, those from Amaravati and the Gupta bronze (Figs. 1, 4 and 9) are gifts from the Government Museum, Madras; the large Padmapani (Fig. 8) was purchased in 1922 from the George Bruce Upton fund; the Khmer head belongs to the Ross collection, and the remainder were purchased in India in 1921 through Dr. Coomaraswamy from the Marianne Brimmer fund.

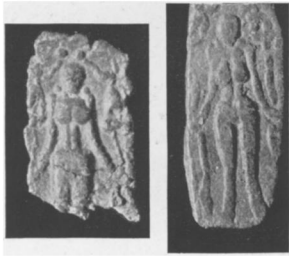


Fig. 2. *Maya Devi or Lakshmi coins*
Kantardai, Ceylon, 1st or 2d century A. D.

of the Buddha, and of events subsequent to the death of the Buddha, exercising here the greater liberty of representing all the characters in a realistic manner. By this time (second to first century B. C.), however, the devotional (*Bhakti*) phase of Indian religion was already in full development; cults of the Hindu deities were in process of evolution, and Buddhism could not escape from the same necessities of the lay community. How and when the first images of Buddha were made is doubtful—certainly as early as the first century B. C. The oldest extant images date from the first century A. D., appearing abundantly in the Indo-Hellenistic art of Gandhara and at Mathura. A Greek origin of the Indian Buddha type has been argued from the Gandhara sculptures, the sources of which are Hellenistic as much as Indian; but it must be taken into account that many of the Mathura figures are unrelated to Gandhara types and evidently derived from older Indian art; that the “seated yogi,” the type of the seated Buddha, is a purely Indian conception; and that the image itself fulfills the necessities of a cult developed in India. Images of Hindu gods were certainly made as early as the second century B. C.

At Amaravati in the second century A. D. we find the old symbolic schemes are still in use; and side by side with these, anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha in standing and seated poses, and here, as also in Ceylon, the Gandhara influence, if traceable at all, is very faint. It is here, moreover, that we meet almost for the first time with Buddhist art that is Buddhist in feeling as well as in formal motifs—the early Buddhist art is edifying, but not psychically Buddhist, the Gandhara art neither vigorous nor spiritual. By the fourth century A. D. and in the succeeding centuries (Gupta period) Buddhist and Hindu art are fully developed; it is the Buddhist art of this time and of the early Mediaeval period (seventh to ninth century) which is reflected in the Buddhist art of China and Japan, as well as in Further India and Indonesia. Buddhist art in India continues to flourish in Bihar and Bengal under the Pala kings until the end of the twelfth century, when the monasteries were destroyed by Muhammadan conquerors. Buddhism and Buddhist art are no longer recognizable as independent elements of Indian religion. It is only in Ceylon, and elsewhere outside of India proper, and then very often in a highly modified form, that Buddhism has survived to the present day.

1. AMARAVATI

The original *caitya* at Amaravati,* on the south bank of the Kistna River, Guntur district, Madras Presidency, dates from about 200 B. C. A few fragmentary sculptures may be of the same age. The casing slabs and the great railing, and also the Buddha figures, date from the latter half of the second century A. D. The railing is the most magnificent known of its kind: about 600 feet in circumference, it stood some 13 or 14 feet above the pavement level. Each upright was decorated

with a full lotus rosette in the centre and half rosettes above and below, with reliefs in the intervening spaces. Each crossbar bore a large lotus rosette on each side and was mortised into the uprights. The coping was adorned with a long, wavy flower roll carried by men, with reliefs of Buddhist themes in the V-shaped spaces above the roll and between the pairs of bearers. The casing slabs, which measured rather more than 3 by 5 feet, bore representations of Buddhist worship and symbols. Nothing now remains *in situ*, much of the structure having been destroyed for building material a little over a century ago. The greater part of what survives is now in the British Museum and in the Government Museum, Madras. To the latter institution the Museum is indebted for the gift of twenty-one sculptured fragments.

The oldest of these pieces are two architrave (*torana*) fragments.* One of these, countersunk in low relief, shows a procession of men and animals (lion and boar?), and is very much worn; the other shows a *makara* (“crocodile”) and lion, and is better preserved. Both may be assigned to the first or second century B. C. All of the other pieces may be assigned to the latter part of the second century A. D. Of these, the battered Buddha head (Fig. 1),† in spite of its condition, sufficiently well illustrates the Indian Buddha type of the

*One of these has been published by Burgess, *Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati, etc.*, pl. XXXI, Fig. 2, and page 69. Also in Rea, A., *South Indian Buddhist Antiquities*, pl. XLI, Fig. 2 and page 49.

†Reproduced, Burgess, *loc. cit.* pl. LVI, Fig. 7, right.



Fig. 3. *Bacchanalian Group, 1st or 2d century*

*Ferguson, J., *Tree and Serpent Worship*, 2d edition, 1873. Burgess, J., *Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jagayyapeta*, 1887. Notes on the Amaravati Stupa, 1882. Rea, A., *South Indian Buddhist Antiquities*, 1894.

Fig. 4. *Worship of the Bodhi Tree: Casing Slab**Amaravati, 1st to 3d century*

finest period of Buddhist art. A second head, in stucco, is hopelessly defaced. Of the casing slabs (*urddhvapatta*), one (Fig. 4) showing the worship of the Bodhi tree (representing the Great Enlightenment) is almost complete, and apart from surface corrosion is well preserved. Numerous other fragments of casing slabs show the worship of the *Dharma cakṛa* (Wheel of the Law); the *triratna* ("Three Gem") symbol, representing the Buddha, the Law, and the Monastic Order; and the *purnaghata* (vase of flowers), an auspicious symbol. Another small fragment shows a seated man playing a lute (*vina*, but not of the modern type). Of the railing (*vedikā*), a pillar base preserves the lower half lotus rosette and a band of fine conventional floral ornament springing from the open jaws of a "crocodile" (*makara*), while a complete crossbar shows a full lotus rosette, the outer row of petals being replaced by a conventional border. Two fragments of coping (*ushnisha*) preserve the figures of two bearers and parts of the flower roll, which is being drawn out of the open jaws of a *makara*; a smaller fragment shows the worship of a *stupa*. All of the structural elements and most of the typical motifs of the sculpture are thus exemplified in the series of fragments, twenty-one in all, which the Museum of Fine Arts is so fortunate in possessing.

2. MAYA DEVI OR LAKSHMI COINS

Certain coins or tokens, chiefly from the old Buddhist site of Kantarodai, in North Ceylon,

may be referred to here.* These are rectangular plaques, the largest recorded measuring one and a quarter inches in length and seven-tenths of an inch in width, and weighing eighty-three grains. The earlier types are made of an alloy of lead and copper in the proportion of about four parts of lead to one part of copper; the later form, of

*Pieris, P. E., *Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna*, J. R. A. S., Ceylon Branch, No. 72, 1921. See also Parker, H., *ibid.*, No. 27, 1884, and Sill, J., *ibid.*, 1907, page 208.

Fig. 5. *Yakshi, from a railing pillar Mathura, 1st or 2d century*

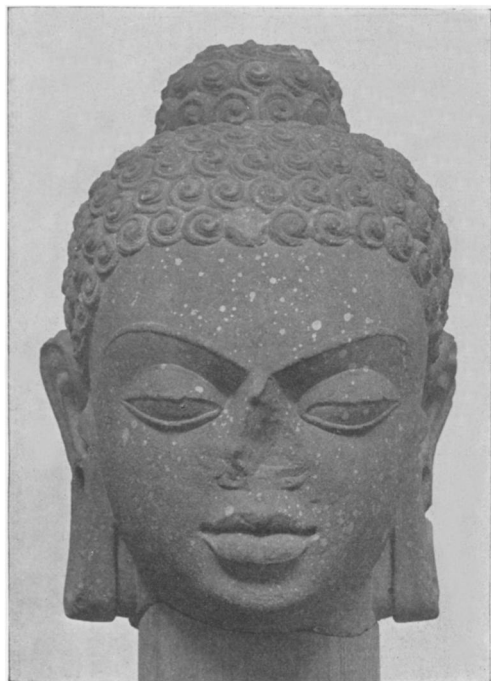


Fig. 6. Head of Buddha
Mathura, 5th century

inferior execution, is made entirely of copper. Whether the objects are actually coins, or tokens or medals of some kind, is uncertain. The details of the design vary only slightly. The typical form shows, obverse, a standing figure of a woman flanked by two lotus stems which rise to more than her full height, the expanded flowers supporting elephants holding inverted water jars. The woman's figure is narrow-waisted, with full and prominent breasts; the arms are held in slightly varying positions, the two hands holding the lotus stems. The costume consists of heavy jewelry — earrings, bracelets, girdle and anklets; certain faint indications of a transparent muslin garment are sometimes recognizable. The reverse bears a large *svastika* raised on a staff, the base of which is enclosed by a railing (*vedika*). The female figure with the elephants is the well-known type of the Indian goddess Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity and consort of Vishnu: the occasion represented being that of her miraculous birth and lustration at the Churning of the Ocean. The motif occurs, however, very frequently in early Buddhist art, e. g., at Barhut and Bodhgaya (second century B. C.), at Sanci (first century B. C.) and at Amaravati and in Kashmir. It has been shown by Foucher* that the representation in this connection must be of Maya Devi, the mother of the Buddha, rather than of the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, the scene being that of the miraculous birth, one of the four great events of the Buddha's life. That the infant Bodhisattva is not represented

*Foucher, A., *Les images indiennes de la Fortune*, Mémoires concernant l'Asie Orientale, Tome I, Paris, 1913, and *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, London, 1918.

is entirely in accord with the tradition of early Buddhist art, in which the presence of the Buddha is never indicated otherwise than by the *mise en scène* or by symbols. In Kashmir at a later date the motif is confused with the representation of Hariti, the "Buddhist Madonna," consort of Kuvera, the Buddhist god of wealth. Probably only during the Gupta period the representation came to be regarded as that of the Brahmanical Lakshmi. The Sinhalese coins or tokens are probably to be referred to the first and second centuries A. D.

3. MATHURA (KUSHAN AND GUPTA)

The School of Mathura (Kushan period, first to third century A. D.; Gupta period, fourth to seventh century) is represented among the recent acquisitions by numerous Buddhist fragments. Certain of these may be Jain, and some may be older than the first century A. D., but the majority are Buddhist of the Kushan period. All are of mottled red sandstone.

The Mathura sculpture of the Kushan period may be described as a direct continuation of the old Indian School of Barhut. The art is fundamentally and profoundly Indian. At the same time certain motifs and compositions are clearly of classical origin, and show the influence of the Græco-Buddhist art of Gandhara. In the Gupta period Mathura sculptures share the general character of the national style, and such of the foreign formulæ as survive have been thoroughly Indianized.

Of the earlier pieces the most interesting (Fig. 3) is a miniature railing pillar, with a representation of a "Bacchanalian scene" on one side, the reverse with lotus rosettes. The Bacchanalian group consists of a pot-bellied, bearded male figure like a Silenus, probably representing Kuvera (Jambhala), and two female figures. The male figure is clothed in short tight drawers and the left arm embraces the female figure to the proper left; a considerable degree of intoxication is suggested. The female figure on the proper left is clothed in a tunic and long skirt, the left hand resting on the protuberant belly of the male. The second female



Fig. 7. Nalanda Monastery Seal

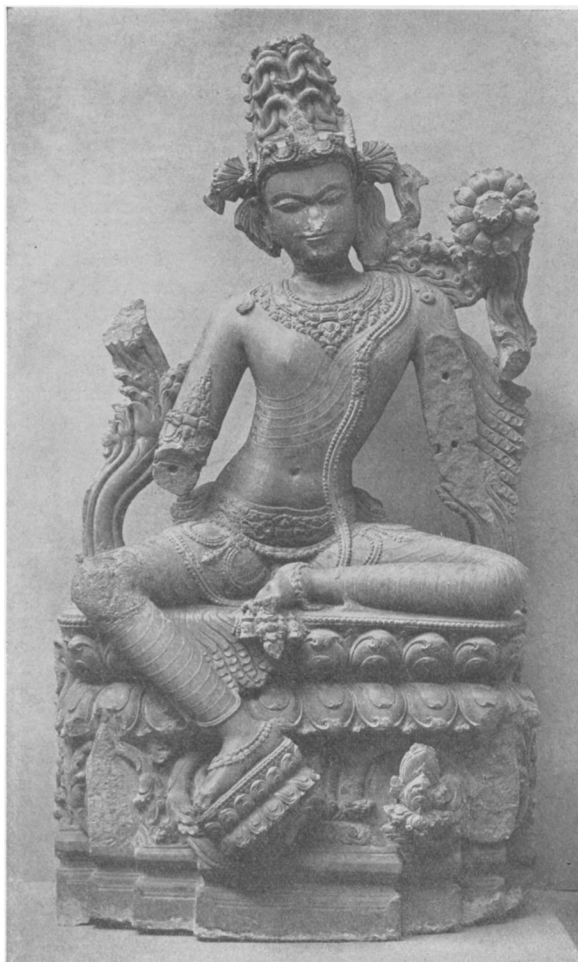
Fig. 8. *Padmapani**Bihar or Bengal, 12th century*

figure is now headless, the top of the pillar being broken away, and is visible behind the male figure only to the waist; the right hand rests on the shoulder of the male.

Several sculptures of this type* have been discovered at Mathura, and related Bacchanalian scenes are represented amongst the Græco-Buddhist sculptures of Gandhara. The type of the male figure is clearly derived from that of the Classical Silenus, but the theme is certainly Buddhist and the male personage a Yaksha, probably Kuvera. The exact significance of these groups, no doubt connected with survivals of Yaksha worship in Buddhist cults, has not yet been fully explained.

Amongst a number of other fragments of Mathura sculpture are portions of railing pillars in red sandstone, consisting of female busts, the upper parts of standing figures represented in relief. In the example illustrated (Fig. 5) the hands are clasped behind the head in an amorous gesture. Figures

of this kind, of a somewhat voluptuous character, used to be regarded as "dancing girls," but almost certainly represent Yakshis, like those which appear on the earlier railing pillars at Barhut. Not only in theme, however, but equally in style and detail, the Mathura railing pillars—whether Buddhist or Jain cannot always be certainly determined—are in the immediate tradition of the older art, without trace of Hellenistic influences. Other sculptures include a part of a railing pillar with lotus rosettes and one complete crossbar corresponding; a capital of the "Indo-Persepolitan" type, with kneeling bulls and lions rampant; part of a worshipping *naga*, no doubt from a Buddhist nativity, and some detached heads.

All examples of the Mathura school so far mentioned are of the Kushan period or slightly earlier. The recent acquisitions, however, include also a large head of Buddha (Fig. 6) of the Gupta period, well preserved except for injury to the nose. This is a typical Gupta work, and closely resembles the head of the well-known standing image of Buddha from the Jamalpur mound now in the

*Notably No. C2 of the Mathura Museum—Vogel, J. Ph., *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum of Mathura*, Allahabad, 1910; p. 83 and pl. XIII.



Fig. 9. Buddha

7th century

Mathura Museum.* A somewhat earlier head, published in the Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin, No. 104, is of a more personal and individual character; the present example adequately illustrates the formula -- in which the tendencies of older Indian art are brought to a focus. This focus is the starting point for the development of freer movement and increasing elegance in early mediæval sculpture in India proper, and on this formula the Buddhist art of Indonesia and the Far East is largely moulded.

4. SOUTHERN GUPTA

Buddhist art of the Gupta period (A.D. 320-700) is further represented amongst recent acquisitions by a standing copper figure of Buddha (Fig. 9), lacking only the right arm and one foot. The monastic robes of the latter image cover only the left shoulder; the indenture of the girdle is clearly marked, the

robes are thin and cling to the body closely, revealing the form. The hair is disposed in numerous short curls, turning to the right and covering the crown of the head and the *ushnisha*. The type is full-fleshed but elegantly built, the shoulders very broad, the lips, especially the lower lip, very full, recalling those of the well-known Mahesa-murti ("Trimurti") at Elephanta. The casting is about 4 mm. in thickness, over a hard, earthy core; the surface is patinated to a rather light green, and partly covered with a calcareous incrustation. In all these respects the figure closely resembles the well-known series of Buddhist images from Bezvada in the Madras Presidency; it is said to have been found in Burma, but in any case is of typical Gupta character and almost certainly of Indian origin.*

5. MEDIÆVAL

Buddhist art of the Early Mediæval period is already represented in the Museum by important and well-known bronzes from Ceylon (Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin, No. 95). Buddhist art of the Mid-Mediæval period (ninth to twelfth century) is richly represented amongst recent acquisitions, chiefly from Magadha (Bihar and Western Bengal) — the original home of Buddhism. The most important of these sculptures (Fig. 8) is a large black stone image of Padmapani (the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara). The Bodhisattva is seated at ease (*lalitasana*); he has high dressed hair (*jata mukuta*), and wears the usual royal costume. The right forearm and part of the left arm are missing, but the expanded rose lotus held in the left hand

*Sewell, *Some Buddhist bronzes*. J. R. A. S., London, 1895. A closely related seated Buddha from Badulla, Ceylon, is illustrated in Coomaraswamy, A. K., *Bronzes in the Colombo Museum*, Colombo, 1914, pl. XVII, Fig. 46. A very similar but earlier standing Buddha figure from Dong Du'ong in Annam has been regarded as of Indian origin (H. Parmentier, *Bull. de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, Vol. XIX, 1919; and *ibid*, Vol. XI, pp. 471, 472).



Fig. 10. Padmapani

13th century

*Vogel, J. Ph., *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum at Mathura*, Allahabad, 1910, pl. IX and pp. 49-50.



Fig. 11. Buddha and the Eight Great Miracles Bihar, 12th century

remains; the pedestal consists of a lotus throne (*padmasana*)* supported by a stem, from which there spring smaller sprays to right and left; a smaller flower supports the pendent foot.

Another Padmapani (Fig. 10), in metal, from Bengal, of the eleventh or twelfth century, is much smaller, but of exquisite workmanship. The figure is similarly seated and clothed; a small *stupa* is represented in the headdress; the right hand is raised in the gesture of exposition, the left carries a rose lotus spray, the distinguishing attribute of Padmapani.

A stone sculpture of high interest (Fig. 11), and remarkably preserved, represents the Eight Great Miracles or significant events of the Buddha's life. The central figure (2), seated beneath the *bodhi* tree in the position of "calling the earth to witness," represents the Assault of Mara and refers to the Great Enlightenment (*Maha-Sambodhi*); in the lower left hand (proper right) corner is represented (1) the Nativity (*Jati*), Maya Devi standing beneath the Asoka tree, supporting herself by her right arm,

the child emerging from her right side; above this is represented (3) the Preaching of the First Sermon (*Dharmacakṣa pravartana*, lit.: "setting in motion the Wheel of the Law"), the Buddha seated,* teaching in the Deer Park at Benares, the circumstance and scene being denoted by the wheel and two deer on the pedestal; above this is a representation (4) of the Buddha walking, representing the Descent from Heaven (*Devavatara*). Above this is a small seated Buddha, which, with the corresponding figure on the same level opposite, may be associated with the representation of the Great Miracle at Sravasti, or, like the two small *stupas* right and left of the head of the central figure, may be merely accessory. On the right hand side (proper left of the representation) a standing figure (5), with a small elephant beside the feet, represents the Taming of the Maddened Elephant; below this is another seated figure (6), teaching, but

*The lotus seat is the usual symbol of miraculous birth and divinity; the lions of the lion throne refer to Sakya Muni, the epithet applied to the Buddha, as the "Lion of the Sakya clan."



Fig. 12. Head of Buddha
Cambodian (Khmer), 9th century

without the wheel and deer, representing the Great Miracle at Sravasti; below this again a seated figure (7) holding a bowl, representing the "Monkey's Offering"; at the top is represented (8) the *Parinirvana*, the dying Buddha reclining on a couch, with disciples to right and left; the significance is further marked by the small *stupa* represented above the reclining figure; while musical instruments (only the hands of the players being shown) indicate the ærial presence of Gandharvas. Around the edge of the slab runs an inscription, the Buddhist "creed," in Sanskrit characters and language:

If all things sprung from a cause
The Buddha hath revealed the cause;
Likewise he reveals how each must end—
Such is the word of the Great Sage.

This "creed," so commonly inscribed on Buddhist sculptures, embodies the essential doctrine of the Enlightenment, the statement of Causality, of which the importance lies in this, that the origin of Evil (to obtain release from Evil is the *raison d'être* of Buddhism) being traced like all else to a cause, and the cause (ignorance, etc.) of Evil being known, the suppression of Evil can be effected by suppression of the cause.

Such is the developed form of sculptured representation of the essential material of Buddhism. A thousand years earlier the same material would have been no less clearly represented, but by

symbols alone. It is interesting to observe that certain of these symbols, e. g., the wheel and the *stupa* are still employed, side by side with the more anthropomorphic statements, and that even these statements are summary symbols or formulæ rather than detailed representations of events. It may be remarked that it is not for the sake of mystery or obscurity that symbols are employed in Oriental art; the symbols, whether anthropomorphic or otherwise, constitute a definite and well-known language, and are employed for the sake of brevity and clarity of statement.

Amongst a series of votive plaques from Nalanda, the site of the most famous Indian Buddhist university, the seal of the University (Fig. 7) shows above the inscription (*Sri Nalanda mahavihara . . .*) the formula already mentioned as referring to the Preaching of the First Sermon in the Deer Park at Benares.

The sculptures last described, together with a number of other pieces amongst the recent acquisitions, and the head of a Bodhisattva published in the Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin, No. 104, p. 61 (Ross Collection), adequately illustrate the Buddhist



Fig. 13. Bodhisattva
Ceylon, 10th century

sculpture of Magadha and Bengal in the Pala period. It is not likely that any of the pieces are older than the ninth century, and certain that none are subsequent to the final destruction of the Buddhist monasteries by Muhammadan conquerors in 1199.

CAMBODIA

A Khmer head of Buddha (Fig. 12) is a recent addition to the Ross Collection. As is usually the case in Cambodian art, the ethnic type is very pronounced, with an effect of realism. A slight divergence from Indian formula will be recognized in the smooth, conical projection rising from the *ushnisha* or protuberance on the skull. This projection is perhaps the prototype of the flame which is constantly represented in the same situation in later Siamese and Ceylonese Buddha figures. The dating of isolated Cambodian sculptures is very uncertain; the present example may be tentatively assigned to the ninth century.

CEYLON

The illustration given last in the present article (Fig. 13) represents a Bodhisattva figure, perhaps Maitreya, acquired for the Museum in Ceylon in 1921, but unfortunately stolen in transit. It is reproduced here, both on account of its great intrinsic interest and in the hope that the object itself may be ultimately traced. The figure is of copper, now much corroded; it was originally covered with thick gold plating, of which only traces now remain. The image is said to have come from the Kurunegala district; it can hardly be later than the thirteenth century or earlier than the tenth. It is related on the one hand to the Ceylonese Pattini of the British Museum (*Visvakarma*, pl. 48), which is probably later than the date (seventh century) hitherto assigned, and on the other to the Saint Reading of Polonnaruwa (*Visvakarma*, pl. 51), which may be regarded, in accord with local tradition, as an effigy of Parakrama Bahu the Great (twelfth century). In spite of its corroded state, this was one of the finest bronzes ever found in Ceylon.

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY.

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Mahavira

North Central India, 10th century

Jaina Sculpture

Recent Acquisition

MAHAVIRA, the historical founder of Jainism and contemporary of Buddha, is represented in Jain art from the Kushan period onwards, as a deified saint to whom prayers may be addressed; though strictly speaking, as a Siddha or liberated soul in the Isatpragbhara, he has no longer any relation with the world. The large sculpture in cream-colored sandstone recently presented to the Museum by Dr. Denman W. Ross consists of the upper half of an image of Mahavira. The head and torso of the Jina are preserved intact; the figure as far as visible is nude. The hair is dressed high in ascetic fashion, with some locks falling on the shoulders. On the breast is the characteristic Jaina sign of the *srivatsa*, a lozenge-shaped mark. Above the head is a triple *chhatra*, surmounted by a crouching figure, and branches of an Asoka tree, the characteristic enlightenment tree of Mahavira; to right and left in the clouds appear a pair of Vidyadharas, moving toward the centre, with offerings. Behind the torso is represented a throne-back, with rampant lion brackets, the upper horizontal bar ending in *makara* heads. The sculpture is probably from Bundelkhand, North Central India, and may be assigned to the ninth century. It is very like a figure amongst the ruins south of the Adinatha temple, Vaibhargiri, Rajgir, a sacred site of the Svetambara Jains (M. F. A. photo, No. 55511). The height of the part preserved is about two feet and three inches.

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY.